

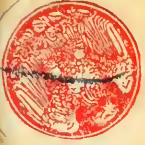
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IMPRESSIONS
CALIFORNIA AND THE WEST





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MORNING, BOHEMIAN GROVE

The summer encampment of the Bohemian Club, San Francisco, where the famous woodland music dramas are produced.

IMPRESSIONS
CALIFORNIA AND THE WEST

A TRIBUTE TO A LAND
OF DEEDS AND SUNSHINE

BY

JAMES ROWBINS

James Rowbins



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TO MY MOTHER

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PROLOGUE

*With all the arts, 'tis well that some
Excel in color, form and tune,
But humbler though the roll of rhyme,
What universal tongues are loosed
By simple words, that fain would paint
Pen pictures on the Walls of Time.*

*Ye blush for errors manifest;
Yet every fledgling falls to earth
Ere yet its pinions bear the test.
But gaining strength, it stems the breath
Of the western wind and the billowy tides,
And high, triumphant, free, it rides
Above the gathering storm.*



A WINTER'S GREETING

When winter comes and the air is chill
And flowers bloom no more in the dell,
Nor summer breezes, soft and sweet
Kiss the cool waters that lave our feet,
 Good bye!

*Sing little bird with silver wing,
Sing, till thy throat shall burst with song;
Fly away to the topmost bough
Joyously through the morning blue,
 I come.

I've found a land that no winter knows,
Where summer reigns and no chill wind blows,
Where birds and bees fill the honeysuckle vine
And rippling brooks flash the bright sunshine.

Bright flowers grow on the green hillside
And silver clouds o'er the forests ride;
Where the luscious grape and the citrus grow
And no blighting frost the rosebuds know.

Come to her green slopes,
 Bathe in her waters clear.
Gaze on her mountains,
 Drink in her pure air.
Seek thy rest in her
 Warm, sweet bosom fair.
 Oh! Come, Oh! Come.

*Words and music dreamed by the author.

THE TRAIL

THE TRAIL

Yo ho! for the trail, ye maids and men
From the city and countryside
For the clatter of hoofs up through the glen
You can hear from far and wide.

Come, don your honest garments brown,
Take a hitch for the steepest climb;
No jewels rare, nor feathery down,
Nor trappings gay will rhyme.

Only with cap and saddle-bag
Fitted with modest needs
To lighten the load of your trusty nag—
We're away, we're away,
With a yip and hooray
To the top, ere the dawn of day.



SUNSET

I stood in the Western Gateway,
With the sunset's golden glow
Tingeing the beautiful waters there,
That sparkled far below.
And from out to sea as far as eye
Could pierce the radiant West,
Came rolling back, like gathering storms
Huge breakers' foaming crests.

Aslant the brilliant sunset line,
Bald mountains rise between
All gaunt and grey and specter-like
Against the fervent screen
Of space beyond, eternal Night—
So soon, with magic breath
To spread its kind enfolding wings,
God's creatures all, beneath.

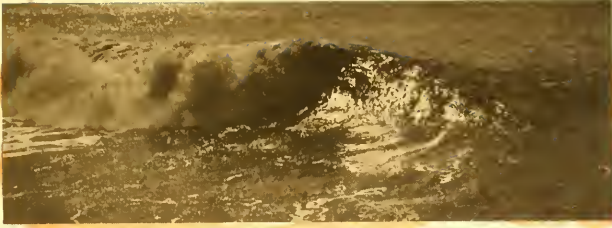
The glory of the sun has set;
The golden goblet's rim
Has turned to pearl resplendent
With reflected gold within.
The brilliant colored pall of Night
Draws closer ere it pale
Like richest crimson blushes hid
Behind a maiden's veil.

SUNSET

But the water grows blacker and blacker
As the sunset fades away,
And my heart sinks deeper and deeper
At the thought of the dying day—
At the thought of the glorious sunshine
That found not its way within,
At the thought of the wasted hours,
Frivolity and sin.

As the sun stooped down to the waters
And sealed with its gorgeous hue
The kiss of Faith for a morning
As beautiful, as blue;
So do thou, as devoutly worship
By the shrine at Nature's door;
For the half of Time is not worth it—
The loss of that sunset hour.

SUTRO HEIGHTS, FEBRUARY, 1912.



VICTORY

Pile high, high, thou pitiless wave
Over thy sea of foam—
Onward, invincible, crest on crest,
Ever insatiable, never at rest
Till the wind shall drive thee home.

Crouch low, low, thou swimmer brave,
Breasting the treach'rous deep
Tow'ring above thee, swirling below,
Piercing the dark green breakers through
As a diver takes the leap.

Seaward, the deep black troughs engulf
Even the staunchest sail.
Well for the clipper that minds her helm,
Well for the skipper that keeps her trim
In the teeth of the rising gale.

Landward, the pitiless breakers course
Thund'rous along the strand
Casting their frenzied foam on high,
Blinding the faithful watch near by
As he crouches on the sand.

VICTORY

Yo ho! bold swimmer, harbor's at hand
Sheltering snug in the encircling land,
Breast thee the tide and ride thee the wave
Saving thy strength 'gainst a watery grave
Where breakers roar and the foam spews high
And the screaming gull tells the storm is nigh.

Strike, as thy strength shall last thee through
Strike, as thy skill hath taught thee how—
Here at thy topmost, there at ease,
Now reaching out in the fresh'ning breeze.
Mount thee strong on the last high crest
And away! Courage, bold swimmer,
'Tis won.

THE BEACH IN A GALE.

THE SUMMIT

THE SUMMIT

A mountain ranges high among the western hills.
From my study window, clear enough defined
'Gainst white fog bank, shimmering in the sun,
I see it and the heart within me yearns
To scale its heights, to lift me clear
Of all these mediocre clods of earth—
This senseless plane of senseless deeds and things
That we, not knowing what we do, term Life.

And strange enough that Life should seem so drear,
So unromantic, of all things bereft
That we do yearn for, till Life's springs,
With bitter tears o'erflowed, becomes
A desert waste—can it be so?
Or do we lack a vision, omniscient
In its source—a God endowed wisdom—
That doth clothe each humble clod of earth
In Nature's beauty—that we think vile.

I set my face to the heights—
With toiling steps through sinking sands and morass
Bramble strewn, o'er rocks and fallen trees,
Hemmed in by Circumstance, by Chance escaped
To loftier levels—ah, one fleeting glimpse;
How sweet a heart balm. What courage lends
To flagging steps. Onward, onward, friend,
Nor let thy gaze forsake the ultimate aim
'Tis, given thee, thy duty—forswear it not.

Impatiently I seek to pierce the gloom
Of darkened forest; not one friendly ray
Rewards my useless strivings toward the Light.
I fail, I sink; within its cruel gaol,
This mountain fastness binds me to itself
Nor guidance lends, its darkened portals veiled.
Ah! God, is this the spirit that I set me forth?
Well, let it be—my flagon's depths,
Once drained, will set me free.

THE SUMMIT

A troubled dream—of ghastly precipice—
Unwary footsteps near. The fatal step—
The screams and clawings on the yielding air
And then—
A friendly twig scarce rooted on the ledge
Looks up and spends its midget strength to stop
The fall. A dream indeed, and yet 'twere true;
'Twixt Life and Death, the smallest of God's creatures
Often come—enough, faint heart, enough.

Upon the lofty summit at last I stand.
Be kind, Oh God, be kind—forgive.
I see that which my streaming eyes may tell
But not to halting language half express—
The secret heart-grip—ah, the lovely pain
Of fulfilled yearnings—now I see again.
A vision comes to me long years denied.
A vision of this topsy-turvy sphere
Wherein doth all things claim reality.
And of their former fancies now divest themselves.
I see the essence of this Universe
Expressed in every living thing and mute.
No stone has turned upon the mountain top
But by the hand of Him decreed, foretold.
Its cosmic movements, not for human mind,
May speak a mystic language; yet through
Contemporary time it speaks our own
And sounds the faint sweet rhythm of the spheres
To ears attuned, to souls that rise, untrammelled,
To the Heights.

How beautiful doth all things then appear.
Not even the shrinking flower escapes our eye.
As in the scheme of things some flowers excel
In brightness, some in fragrance, all possess
Some spark of beauty. So all things
That make of Nature, the substance and the form
Appear to hold within, a spot of color bright
To frame complete the universal canvas of my dreams.

TAMALPAIS, JULY, 1912.

IN BOHEMIA

IN BOHEMIA

Nay, thou knowest not Bohemia, not
With all thy cursed ducats canst thou buy
One stone within the mighty parapet
Upcreared by toiling hands now clasped
In deep fraternal love—nor yet
Canst hope, its sacred fastnesses to pierce
Till Mammon's taint hath fled thee and thy hand
Extendeth with thy heart to help to serve.

No frigid form enslaves Bohemia's halls,
No sterile phrase belies her greetings warm;
No prowling wolves of selfishness, deceit
Can steal within this magic circle lit
With flaming swords that shall ever burn
Till men shall solve the riddle of Fraternity.

Know thou that but one master-key
Rolls back the sacred portals of Bohemia—
A key wrought in the forges of men's hearts
Of fairest fibres, strong and then refined
And polished on the buffers of men's minds.

A gentle Muse sits at the temple gates
And holds this key for all her devotees.
And blest, indeed, is he whose kindred soul
Finds opportunity in her quickening caress
As, through the magic password of her grace,
He enters fair Bohemia.

BOHEMIAN CLUB, SAN FRANCISCO, 1913.



DIANA. *By HAIG PATIGAN*
Designed for *The Atonement of*
Pan, Bohemian Grove play, 1913.

WALDWEBEN

WALDWEBEN

A maze of pillared grandeur
In the stillness of the night;
A gentle hush as breathless
As the pure and cold starlight
That reaches from the mystic depths
Of the empyrean above
And casts the ghostly mantle
Of the Eternal, Infinite.

A shadowy dome encircling
Its mighty pillared towers;
A swaying pendent curtain merging
All the peaceful hours.
Only the giant arms of earth
Uplifted unto heaven
To span the magic distances
Within these titan bowers.

Dost thou hear the muted music
Of this slumbrous forest glade
With the ghostly moonlight wavering
'Round the shadow that is made
Where thou standest, bared to heaven,
With thy inner soul transfixed
By the potent mystic language
Of this silent nebulous shade?

Ye Titans of these sacred groves
Raising to heaven thy mighty shafts
Unbent by winds, unscathed by fire,
Rooted fast in these earthen depths—
Doth aeons spell thy span of life,
And is thy heart of hearts, within
This very rugged bark contained,
A talisman of the birth of Time?
I touch—and all my being thrills
With the magic of the centuries.

WALDWEBEN

Give me thy strength
O giant tree;
Straight as thy shaft
Let my vision be;
Deep as thy roots
Be my soul inspired
Then may the drums of Time
Roll on, roll on.

BOHEMIAN GROVE, AUGUST, 1912.

THE GATES OF TIME

YOSEMITE JINGLES

THE GATES OF TIME

A placid pool of limpid blue
All roundabout enwreathed
With a hundred colors of the dell
And shades of varied hue.

Or is't a magic mirrored screen
Within whose crystal depths
The heart of Nature seems revealed
In blue and verdant green?

What skillful hand that margin drew
To bridge the nebulous space
'Tween infinite depth and infinite height—
Vast realms of limpid blue.

Ah, could I cross the mystic line
And gaze behind the veil
Where Time meets Time and once again
Dream music rings divine.

MIRROR LAKE.



DREAM MUSIC

DREAM MUSIC

Till yesterday, my eyes were blind
With deep illusioned visions of the vale—
That mystic vale of strength and peace
That links today with dreadful aeons past.

I wander through its moonlit mazes sweet
With odors of the summer; purling streams
Their gentle harmonies upraise, and oft
The rustle of the pendent bough bespeaks
The presence of some living, moving thing
Disturbed in its slumbers—dreams perhaps
Of yet another world—who knows?

And still I gaze—
Uplifted to the awful heights that seem
The very walls of endless Time upreared,
While softly, breathless, still, the silver light
Steals with ever lengthening shadows through the vale.

Oh, gentle shades of virgin night—
Enfold me in thy silver-winged hours.
Mine eyes are dim with gazing, and my soul,
Fast fettered, yet borne strangely up,
Would scale the ethereal heights and see
Eternal wonder-worlds—would burst the bonds
That tie me to this sordid mill of tears
And soar upon the music of the spheres.

Oh, that I might, on muted strings, enthrall
The wondrous music of this wondrous night
And, high upon ascendent harmonies,
My unleashed soul its wingèd flight pursue
To pierce the ethereal shadows of the night
And search the corners of infinitude,
Borne ever on morn's golden shafts of Light.

Still softly, breathless, steals
The ever lengthening shadows of the vale.

YOSEMITE BY MOONLIGHT.

GLAUBE

GLAUBE

Listen to the merry river
Rushing onward to the sea—
How it laughs and how it tumbles,
How it gurgles merrily.

Rocky bed makes little hind'rance
To its never ceasing flow—
With a laugh it dances 'round them
For it always seems to know

That, whatever the obstruction,
Rock or bank or fallen tree—
By its twisting, wriggling, squirming,
It can always get to sea.

But sometimes this merry river
Seems forgetful of its mood
That today makes it delightful
As the charm of field and wood.

Then its soul is wild and frenzied;
Then its lashing spume casts high
In the madness of its plunging
To the depths of sea and sky.

'Tis the awful pack and pressure
Of the snow-fields drained afar;
'Tis the wild descent and impact
Of the cascades mighty power.

'Tis the wild rush down the canyon
Now confined 'twixt cruel walls
That has filled its soul with terror
And dispelled the woodland calls.



VERNAL FALLS AND THE
MERCED RIVER
Yosemite Valley

GLAUBE

But the friendly sun of summer
Gently smooths its troubled way,
Tames its wild heart to the beating
Of a peaceful slumbering day.

Oh! the depths of human passion,
Anguish, longings, hopes and tears;
Would this summer sun could waken
Sweet content for future years.

Dost thou think this merry river
Ever tires of ceaseless flow—
Lashing, splashing, curling, purling
Leaping far to pools below.

Or that ever one doubt wakens,
In its wild tumultuous breast,
That the evening of the lifetime
Will bring Love and Peace and Rest.

MERCED RIVER, AUGUST, 1912



YOSEMITE VALLEY IN SPRING-
TIME

The great peak of Tis-sa-ack
(Half Dome), is just discernible
above the fog bank.

TIS-SA-ACK

TIS-SA-ACK

Thou, Goddess of the riven hills—
I gaze upon thy shrouded form,
Thy temples bathed in the breath of the sea
Thy feet bedewed with the tears of the land,
What message bearest thou!

Dost cover thy face for the deeds of men
Or glories of thy people gone?
And yet, with proud unbended head,
Thou reignest, Goddess of the mystic vale.
Unmindful of the winter blasts
Or swollen torrents at thy feet. .
Disdainful of the centuries,
Yet always in thy regal grace
Communing with thy worshippers
In language of the lips of Time.
Thou reignest still, O matchless one
Chaste Goddess of the riven hills.

Tis-sa-ack, Indian for Half Dome, Yosemite.



THE DUNES OF SUNSET
San Francisco

THE BUILDERS

THE BUILDERS

Along the trackless wastes
Creep mystic shadows, golden tipped.
As harbingers of night they sing
Strange melodies oft sweetly dissonant
With the warm impassioned heart-throbs
Of the dying day.

The serried dunes,
O'er flecked with countless wind-born rivulets,
Roll gently on from out the crimson west.
Incessant movement marks their restless years.
The immobile earth, entranced by the beauty
Of the scene, reflects the rhythmic movement
Of the wave, urged on by sea-born breezes
Strength perfumed.

Within these shadow worlds,
The air seems redolent with mystery;
Except for the murmur of the wind
And roar of surf, no voice is heard;
No living thing exists—no home of bird
Or beast, not even one tender blade of grass
To play its midget part within the great
Symphonic choral of the spheres.

The strings are hushed;
No longer surge the golden passion-chords
Of twilight glow. The darkling labyrinth
Impends; only the pounding of the surf
To break the gloom—that swells and dies again
Enmeshed in foam.

THE BUILDERS

Mysterious silence—and yet
I seem to hear the hammer blows of Time.
Beneath my hand, the vibrant earth seems full
With melody of wondrous strange portent—
Before my straining eyes, there seem to pass
In vague uncertain movement, visions rare
Of a wondrous thing—a City Beautiful
Upreared where last I saw but dreary wastes
And wandering dunes.

'Tis night.
And through long eucalyptus shadows pale,
The winter moon now threads its silvery way
Engrossing all this slumbering wonder-world,
This topsy-turvy clime all summer hued,
With liquid diadem.

Can this be true—
This metamorphic change from virgin dunes
To peaceful homes and gardens, flower-strewn;
The terraced slopes that yield an ample vision
Of the West, and all but hid in depths
Of trellised vine and rose and poppies gold
That seems to draw within their radiant cups
The essence of a thousand golden sunsets?

Ah! Enough of clanging wars and marts and men,
Of seething mills, Hell's cauldrons, city's din.
Could we sever from them all our few short years
And shove them in the Past with all their tears,
Would we not revel in the joys of sea and sky,
Of hill and mountain-top where star-drops lie,
Or drowse within our garden flowered deep,
While June for cold Decembers hostage keeps.
Tis then the strife of men and pelf is hushed—
The Builder's work triumphant at the last.

THE DUNES OF SUNSET, SAN FRANCISCO, NOVEMBER, 1912.

STRIFE

STRIFE

TO THE SELFISH AND WILFUL PERVERTORS OF MEN'S MINDS

With bristling mien and clenched fist
He roareth up and down—
Black hatred in his heart unleashed,
The venom of a mind diseased
That reapeth where 'tis sown;
A thousand daggers raised behind,
A thousand curses hurled afar,
A thousand lies to warp the Truth
Enough to fool the blind.

Is there no citadel that's safe
From all this mockery?
Are Truth and Justice, Innocence,
An upright life, a country's flag
Naught else but carrion prey?

Why rest ye in supine content
With ravin stalking wild?
Shall all the hands of Time estop,
The busy wheels of Industry,
And fertile fields be seared to waste
All ruined by this bastard child—
Sired by a monstrous Hate,
Born in Evil's unloved dens,
Reared in Desolation's grime
And doomed to Strife?



TWO HOMES UPON THE HILL

The one—a simple cottage home
Deep set in the garden bloom
No strident tone disturbs its peace
Nor vulgar eye, nor profane lip.
Avaunt! thou hovering spirit gloom
Of Mammon's greed.

The other—ah, but mark it well—
Doth not its chaste and glistening front
Shine brilliant in the sun.

THE GREAT WHITE WAY

THE GREAT WHITE WAY

THOUGHTS ON HENNER'S "MAGDALEN"

I cannot think them all so vile—
This vast bedizened crowd that throngs
The blazing strand—these poor
And painted creatures, lost of men
And God except the one last bond
Of conscious error, wrought by Fate,
The purpose of her will fulfilled.

Ye pity, yes and scorn perhaps
With brow uplift and bated breath,
But canst not give a helping hand.
From bulging larder, not a crust
Canst spare to save the final plunge
To blackened depths, the knife, the shot.

Perhaps thy heel once left imprint
Upon the sacred ground thou feignest,
Hypocrite!



SUNSET FROM THE CLIFFS
LAND'S END

RETROSPECTION

RETROSPECTION

FROM THE HILLTOPS AT SUNSET, GOLDEN GATE.

Deep in the pitying bosom of the sea,
Ebbs fast the glory of a dying day.
And on the giant battlements
That guard these glowing portals of the night,
Another niche appears, full chiseled, deep.
How many fateful names enregistered
In burning letters on that scroll of Time.

But what of it—What matters that
The chastened page be rudely blotted out
By hands that ever faltered as they wrote;
That ere the cruel ink was scarcely dry,
Hot tears erased the shameful entry?

Nay the thing has passed
And deep within the glowing embers lies
The substance—and the form
Ethereal shapes assume that seem, withal,
On golden pinions to have taken flight
And vanished with the spirits of the night.

COMPENSATION

COMPENSATION

WHERE MORNING BESTS ACHIEVEMENT, THERE FIGHT I.

Has the spice of Life, its savour lost
Amid the reeking din
And its pleasures turned to charnels
Of dishonor, shame and sin?

Has the fresh warm morning sunshine
Of the hilltop lost its charm
Or the restless surge of ocean
Filled thy soul with deep alarm?

Does the woodland's gentle calling
Fail to lure thy weary way
To its peaceful, friendly shadows
At the cradle of the day?

Then—work, till the sunbeams
Slant across the sky,
Till the task is fulfilled
And the cool of evening's nigh.

Work, till thy pulses
Thrill to merry tunes
With the royal blood of manhood
Chanting magic runes.

Work, though the glowering
Clouds of failure pall
With snarling hounds of discord
Bent upon thy fall.

COMPENSATION

Does the ocean heed the pebble
Careless cast by wanton hand,
Or the mountain fear the sandstorm
Blown afar from desert land?

Does the golden orbit waver
In its endless, changeless way
By the senseless exhortations
Of the worshippers that pray?

Or the petal, ere unfolding
In the bosom of the Spring
List the dreary wastes of Winter
To fulfill its blossoming?

Oh! the golden hours of lifetime
Twixt the pale of rest and play
When a man works out his soul-force
On the anvil of God's day.

When the dross is stricken off him,
When his arm is raised in might,
When his heart is strong and humble
And his eyes shine full with Light.

Then his destiny rewards him;
Then the clouds of black despair
With a sudden evolution
Quick dispel the anxious care.

Stand aloof! ye clods of failure,
Stand ye back and watch and pray
That your sluggish veins may tingle
Once again—as in olden day.
That your freighted soul take courage,
That your feeble hand find strength,
That your eye may speak its freedom
When the Conqueror comes your way.

SONG OF THE HUNTSMAN

SONG OF THE HUNTSMAN

Oh! the bird is on the wing, dear!
He rose with the morning dew
And speeds o'er downs and hills and towns
To bear my love to you.

Then fare him on his way, friends
Nor strike not the cruel blow
As he soars along on the wings of song
And dips in the limpid glow.

For his heart is as light as mine, dear
And his song but a promise true
That he'll search throughout the world, dear
To bear my love to you.

THE CONQUEST

There came to me one day, unthought,
A picture of two children fair;
It stands before me as I write—
A glimpse of two bright little lives
In lands far distant, where the sun
Sinks down to sea, with gorgeous hue,
Behind a bristling coast.

The broad Pacific lies before—
A chained giant held in leash,
And to the East a rugged range
Of lofty peaks o'er-topped in silent
Majesty—Mount Rainier—
That stately pile so chastely crowned
With everlasting snows.

THE CONQUEST

At Christmas time the message came.
With wond'rings, I cut the knot—
That magic key of hopes and fears,
And found—a bit of bristol board.
But what dear memories aroused
This simple likeness of two friends
So far away, yet near!

A girl and boy I see at play
Idling the golden hours through;
No work nor care their lives enmesh,
Except the pot of jam runs dry
And finger exercises pall
And seven to bed, and other dread things
The bogey man invents.

I met her first upon the stair.
To her I was like other men
From out the dreadful wilderness
Of roaring marts and flaming fires,
Of wheels and whistles, smoke and din,
Of cabs and cars, and clanging bells,
And ghouls and goblins.

To her the tender years were yet
Unspent; where life encircles 'round
A simple home, with vines and trees
And climbing roses, all too large
To make a nosegay of. And then
There was a cherry tree so high
It almost touched the stars.

Alas, what sad mistake I made;
For now-a-days young men do need
An introduction to a maid
Before they have a right to plant
Resounding kisses on the spot
Reserved for others, especially
When whiskers interfere.

THE CONQUEST

In vain I pouted, coaxed, and prayed;
The little maid would not unbend,
Her big blue eyes would search me out
From 'round her mother's sheltering chair,
Or safely 'tween the table legs,
She'd weigh me in her balance keen
And always find me wanting.

But soon I found a vantage-point,
And hugged it close; for all is fair
In love and war, and honorable my
Intentions were. Tho' sad it was
To have to play a trick so bold
Upon a maid of tender years,
She yielded to temptation.

For love of gold 'twas brought her low,
And, in one fateful moment, she
Undid the latch Pandora spied
When curiosity o'ercame
Her maiden prudence and released
A thousand devils. 'Twas, in short,
Four shiny silver dollars.

These sealed her doom, and I,
Not slow to take advantage of 't,
With ghoulish glee would drop them down
First one, then two, then three, then four,
Then one again and two, three, four,
And one—but she did not perceive
The foul trick nor trickster.

The battle's won and we are friends,
Fast friends; what difference the means
Whereby 'twas done, so long as I
May claim her love, and reign withal,
Within her childish heart, as one
Redeemed of faults, still manifest,
But nevertheless redeemed.

THE CONQUEST

And now her "bruvver" kisses her
On that same spot and dries her tears
When bears appear upon the stairs
To growl at little Frances' fears
And big black dogs come blustering up
All mouths and teeth to eat her Jip
And vines lay wait to trip her feet
As she walks bravely down the street
And bees buzz 'round her golden hair
For honey-cups in flowers fair.
A gallant knight to her must be
And I would too could I be he.
God bless 'em both, but you and I
Must never, until years go by,
Reveal the secret of the trick
I turned—for 'twas just in the nick
Of time to save me from defeat,
And put my plans to full retreat;
God grant she'll stay me true.

CHICAGO, DECEMBER 25, 1911.

THE FRIENDS I LOVE

THE FRIENDS I LOVE

I have a little book-stand near my bed
To snatch a moment's pleasure from each night
Before reluctant slumber bids me fold
The wings of fancy 'till the morning breaks.

Of all the precious volumes on my shelves,
These little treasure-ships still hold the power
To turn my face away from cares and fears
And set my sails, full tilt, to slumber-land.

For in the silent calm of midnight hours,
When the soul of man is weary and forspent
With battles and with strivings toward that end
Pre-destined as the heritage of Fate,

'Tis then the eyes strain upward to the dome
Of Heaven for some faint gleam of friendly light,
For some sweet drop of heavenly vintage poured
By angels from the golden bowl of night.

And then it is I turn me to my friends,
Mute friends, all silent through the livelong day.
But what a message do they bear to me
When I can loose their tongues with friendly touch.

Between the covers of these little books
There's writ, in fiery letters, man's destiny.
The gamut of emotion runs its course
Fun, frolic, fancy, love, stark tragedy.

Each pretty volume, silent, beckons me
For special ministrations to my mood,
With fond caress I hand them gently down
And turn the fingered pages, one by one.

THE FRIENDS I LOVE

Ah! here June roses, sweet, do bloom and blow,
And here, the fancies of some childish heart;
There, the smooth turning of the wheel of rhyme
And then again strange pictures from my book of dreams.

Then to my heart of hearts straight go the shafts
Of sweet impassioned utterance, till my tears
Do blind me, as golden winged messengers
From some far distant throne of radiant light.

Tis then, oh then, I bow me humbly down
In fervent worship at the jeweled shrine
Of Genius, Art—call it what you will—
Inspired thought, God-given, Man-despised.

Grand harmonies, played upon the keys of Heaven
That lift my very soul to outer spheres
Of passion, rage, sweet ecstasy of tears
And leave my soul refined and calm and mute.

O thou, who dost scoff at tender words,
And, cursing, spurn the hand that heals thy wounds,
God give thee grace, that, through the impending gloom,
Thy darkened eyes at last shall see the dawn.

God grant that, by some wond'rous alchemy,
Thy heart of hearts may guide thy erring feet
And fling the portals wide for smiles and tears
Ah! that were most beautiful, indeed.

CHICAGO, 1911.

THE BLUEBIRD

THE BLUEBIRD

REFLECTIONS ON MAETERLINCK'S IMMORTAL DRAMA OF HAPPINESS

Along the shiftings sands of Time
By many founts, in many climes,
I search for that one thing most dear
The Wine of Joy, sweet ecstasy of tears.

How oft, within my very grasp,
It seemed to flutter, then to gasp
Away its precious heart-throbs—still
It lay—poor creature of my will.

Is it the blighting touch of Care,
Of Selfishness, untaught Desire,
Of morbid cravings for the flower
That withers in the passing hour?

The rose that on the hillside grew,
Blushing red in the morning dew,
Withers and pales in the noon-day glare
From the fervent heat, and the breathless air.

Ah, cruel, that a hand of mine
Should kill the thing it holds divine;
That what my very soul doth crave
Should vanish in my presence, save
The perfume of sweet memory's flower
That lingers as it pales, The hours.

Of Time in anxious sands depart
While, mumbling of Life and Soul and Heart,
Do we, in stupid epigrams besot,
Still flounder in the swales of Thought.

THE BLUEBIRD

Ah, give me of that simpler joy,
That sweet estate when girl and boy
In freedoms play, bereft of care,
With youths' bright flowers scattered there.

Could I retain that simpler grace
Of childhood's manner, form and face
And see with eyes unsullied, through
The wonders of my dreams, come true.

Not in the jungles of Desire,
Not in the race for Gold and Power
Not in the clash of arms nor blare
Of brazen trumpets' bold fanfare.

A golden chalice holdest thou
Before my lips to quaff—my brow
Thy gentle hands doth press
And soothe the pain with kind caress.

Oh, Happiness indeed, untaught,
By Fashion's sterile hand unwrought,
The subtle wafture from thy breast
Now rends the Veil—at last, at last.

WHITHER

WHITHER

Has the glory of the sunset hue
No significance except
A momentary fascination
In rose and gold and blue—
A wonder work of a Master Hand
Endowed with living glow,
Spread on the canvas of the seas
And framed from land to land?

I wonder, as I stand a-top
The loftiest vantage-point
And drink the luscious goblet full
Till not a single drop
Remains to cloy the quickened sense
When the Spirit shall have fled
That gave it color, life and form,
But left its recompense.

No purer draught from Nature's store,
With bounteous treasures filled,
Than this deep draught of golden wine.
'Tis quaffed, and lo! before
My vision steals the roseate glow
Of evening, ere the sun
Its golden rimmed wall of sea
Has scarcely sunk below.

The aureate wreath in the western sky
Resolves into limpid blue;
Only the mountains, tier on tier,
In silent grandeur lie—
Grim guardians of the Gates of Night
Whose mystic depths engulf
Their rugged ramparts, run to earth
Beyond the pale of sight.

WHITHER

Friends, can all this splendor be
But a riff in the Sands of Time,
As a feather soars on the billowy air
Till the wind dies out to sea?
Does the silent tear down the mantling cheek
Tell of the heart's warm glow
As it sinks itself in the infinite depths
Of beauteous Nature? Speak!

Ye lovers of the sky and sea,
Tell me, can such thing be
As the eternal nothingness of all
That seems so beautiful to me;
Nor aught of thine, nor aught of mine
We treasure ere depart
Shall change a hair's-breadth in the Book
Of Destiny—one line?

"GOLDEN GATE," MARCH 30, 1912.

BY THE HAND OF MAN

BY THE HAND OF MAN

In troubled dream, another vision came
Of whirling through the vast and treach'rous space
Of Night. With thundrous roar,
We clave the blinding nebulae of mist;
As lightning, flashed the suns of other spheres,
And still the Arrow drives in sinuous flight
Into the midnight gloom, its guiding star
Two lines of steel, hung on the western rim.

The Bow has spoken; still the Arrow drives
Unspent. As fiery steed, it chafes the bit.
With restless pantings and snorting fire,
In ever longer strides it reaches out
Consuming distance in its ravenous speed.
Is there no helm or helmsman to this steed
All bone and sinew, wrought of steel and fire,
This mighty maddened Titan of the Night?

The vision changed; a gallant company
Of souls fare westward. In oblivion
Of sleep they dream of peaceful woodlands,
Storied halls. Doth hear, fair sleeper,
The roar and grind beneath thy downy bed?
Doth see the hand of Death clutch at thy throat,
With baffled shriek return and ever again
To wreak his vengeful purpose?
Does the Arrow ever waver in its flight?
What if the Bow had snapped, or hand that drew
The powerful thongs had weakened at the last.

But no.

The ever watchful eye of Genius holds
The flame tipped Arrow to its gleaming path.
Upon its pulse, the skillful hand is laid
That curbs its restless wayward spirit's might
And cheats Death's spectre of its choicest prey.

BY THE HAND OF MAN

I see the guiding Genius at the helm;
The lurid Vast his piercing eye foretells.
Mid teeming ruin and destruction schooled,
He whistles jauntily away the hours
Of Death, swift Death, and as the morn
Its first rose tinted hues has spread,
He brings the panting Titan to its goal.

Dost thou, fair traveller, ere think,
When restless with thy petty strife,
Of him who holds thy priceless life
Within his hand, as snow drops sink
And melt and vanish?
To him, tis loss or gain erased;
To you, grim cataclysms faced—
Beware the spending of thy Hour.

OVERLAND.

HOMeward BOUND

HOMeward BOUND

If ever, when the day rolls 'round
To cross again this continent,
Thou feelst the weight of heavy hours
And sleep invites to sweet content,

May mem'ries rise of other days
When this same continent you crossed
Within that wee corral of friends
Together by good fortune tossed.

Thou'lt chuckle at the scene revived
When Finnegan, "Our Hero" prim,
Didst roll his proud and shapely form
Upon the floor as in babydom.

When modest Richards through the chair
His animated form didst thread,
And blinking Steiger's comely bulk
Performed the light fantastic tread.

When mighty Bivens found a point
Upon that treach'rous shaky floor
To balance him while speeding through
The air at seventy miles an hour.

And Uncle Crusty Brown didst strain
His face all out of shape, and why?—
To keep from smiling or from speech
While cruel minutes ambled by.

But even when, with blushing pride,
Did Jones recite the homely lay
Of Mary and her lovely lamb,
There still remains one memory:

HOMeward BOUND

Supremest moment—when the lot
To proud "Superba" lastly fell;
Weep not that in the hour of need
No guardian angel came to tell

Poor Handlon of his P's and Q's
To start his valedictory;
That 'neath the spell of woman's smiles
Fell our hero of Compartment "A." *

Whene'er the scales of Justice tilt
So far aside that ne'er again
Their primal equipoise it seems
Can scarcely hope to soon regain;

'Tis then that circumstances seem
To find a way to have things changed.
Unlooked for pitfalls gape and yawn—
'Tis then the Fates have been avenged.

*Gamblers' paradise





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